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The more detailed your outline, the better shape you'll be in.

—Shonda Rhimes

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CHAPTER RECAP

It's finally time to write your script! Before you start the physical act of writing it, Shonda highly recommends you write a beat sheet and an outline first.

A beat sheet is the precursor to an outline. It lays out the important moments in an episode, and what needs to happen in each of your acts. An outline stems from your beat sheet, and details the specific scenes you are going to write for each act. An outline gives you a guide that you can follow when you begin writing your script.

For Shonda, visualizing the last scene helps her structure an episode and determine what must transpire in each act. In the early days of *Grey's Anatomy*, themes also played a huge part in how each of the episodes was structured. Every writer approaches the writing process differently. Find a method that works for you, and share it with your MasterClass classmates!

TAKE IT FURTHER

- Watch the first season of *Grey's Anatomy* and see if you can suss out the theme that drives each episode. How does Shonda apply the theme in each episode's surgeries, character development, and Meredith's voiceover?

ASSIGNMENT

- Write out the beat sheet for your pilot. There are a variety of methods you can use: dividing a sheet of paper into five sections (to represent your acts), using a whiteboard, pinning up index cards, or using a computer program. Use this beat sheet to begin writing your outline.

SUBCHAPTERS

- ▶ Have an Incubation Period Before Writing
- ▶ Write a Beat Sheet
- ▶ Develop an Outline
- ▶ Use Themes to Shape Your Episodes

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